

Testimony in Strong Support of Senate Bill 980

By Min. Eric Brokman

Chairman Senator Feldman, Vice Chairman Senator Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

I stand before you today in fervent support of Senate Bill 980. This crucial piece of legislation goes beyond simply expanding computer science education in our schools; it's a necessary step towards safeguarding our national security.

While I applaud the existing requirement for all high schools to offer computer science courses, we must acknowledge the ever-evolving threat landscape. Cyberattacks are no longer the sole domain of mischievous teenagers ("script-kiddies"). Our adversaries, including state actors, possess sophisticated capabilities, constantly seeking to infiltrate critical infrastructure, steal sensitive data, and disrupt essential services.

The lack of a skilled cybersecurity workforce leaves us dangerously exposed. A recent report by the **Cyber Maryland Program**, headed up by **TEDCO**, the Daily Record, September 25th, 2023, highlights Maryland's 30,000 unfilled jobs in the field of cybersecurity, jeopardizing our nation's ability to defend itself in cyberspace.

With over 38 years of experience in the IT field, including 15 years as a cybersecurity subject matter expert, I've witnessed the growing demand for skilled professionals firsthand. My experience supporting government agencies like the Department of Energy, DoD, and State Department, coupled with leading Focus on Communities United for Success, a 501c3 non-profit IT workforce development program in Baltimore, underscores the significant gap between the need and current supply of cyber professionals. **The passage of Senate Bill 980 is crucial to address this critical need.**

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The lack of a skilled cybersecurity workforce leaves us dangerously exposed. A recent study by International Information System Security Certification Consortium (ISC)² 2023 Cybersecurity Workforce Study: This study, conducted by a leading cybersecurity organization, estimates a global cybersecurity workforce gap of **nearly 4 million** professionals in 2023. While an increase from previous years, this report shines a light on the widening gap between demand and supply.

Highlights a global shortage of cybersecurity professionals, jeopardizing our nation's ability to defend itself in cyberspace.

Senate Bill 980 offers a powerful solution. By:

- **Mandating efforts to increase enrollment in computer science courses, particularly among underrepresented groups,**
- **Requiring developmentally appropriate computer science instruction in elementary and middle schools,**
- **Aligning this instruction with state standards that emphasize cybersecurity best practices,**

We plant the seeds for a future generation equipped to confront these digital threats.

This isn't just about education; it's about national security. Every line of code written by a skilled American cyber professional strengthens our national defense. **Passing Senate Bill 980 is not merely beneficial, it's imperative.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

By Min. Eric Brockman
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